



No Good from a Corpse

Leigh Brackett

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Hollywood private investigator Edmond Clive, fresh from a big job in San Francisco, discovers that there's plenty of trouble for him to investigate on his home turf. First, his best gal, a torch singer at a place on the Strip called the Skyway Club, suspects that someone is watching her, and not just because she's a knockout.

Next, his boyhood best friend, Mick, wants him to figure out who has been sending nasty letters that threaten to rile up the family of rich neurotics into which Mick has recently married.

Since Mick has been leaning on the torch singer's shoulder while Clive was away, those two cases merge into a single helter-skelter crisis—and that's before the singer gets bludgeoned to death with Mick's blackthorn walking stick, even as Clive and Mick both slumber nearby.

Brackett wields these plot pieces to form a dead-on Raymond Chandler pastiche. Even this book's finishing twist, a real doozy in its own right, emerges like a half-remembered psycho-sexual nightmare straight out of *The Big Sleep*. The author also plays exuberantly with every other tic and trope in the Chandler repertoire, and rolls out wisecracking dialogue with high vigor, if not with originality.

Brackett had quite a career. She wrote a slew of science-fiction tales in the 1940s, mostly for hoary but fondly remembered pulp titles like *Planet Stories* and *Startling Stories*, and she penned a scattered few crime and mystery novels besides *No Good* over the course of several decades. But she's best known for her work as a screenwriter, with screenplay credits that range—improbably enough—from the Bogart and Bacall classic *The Big Sleep* (1946) to the modern space-opera blockbuster *The Empire Strikes Back* (1979) which is dedicated to her memory.

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